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The Looming Superpower Confrontation

By ARNOLD BEICHMAN

We now have an administration more assertive about resistance to Soviet moves than any since John F. Kennedy's.

This is written neither gloatingly nor boastfully. Rather, it is intended to raise the level of American awareness of what this turnaround in U.S. foreign policy under President Reagan may presage.

Sometime this year, certainly before December when the cruise and Pershing II missiles are due for deployment in Western Europe, the Soviet Union (with or without an ailing Yuri Andropov) will do something that will precipitate a confrontation between the two superpowers.

The confrontation will be one for which American public opinion will be ill-prepared. Neither the president nor those around him who have pressed for an assertive anti-Soviet policy have begun to speak openly about their own understanding of what may be ahead.

The Kremlin's Perspective

The Reagan assertiveness hasn't been understood fully, so let us look at U.S. policy from the Kremlin's perspective:

1) The U.S. is supporting five anti-communist insurgencies—Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique and Nicaragua.

2) The flow of Western technology, particularly that of the U.S., to the U.S.S.R. and its satellites continually is being reduced.

3) The flow of capital to the Soviet bloc has been reduced sharply.

4) Western Europe presents the strongest anti-Soviet front in 30 years—Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Helmut Kohl in West Germany, Francois Mitterrand in France and a Polish Pope.

5) U.S. rearmament is well under way. Congress has approved building the MX. The recession is more or less over and the Dow Jones Industrial Average is around 1200, a sign of confidence in the U.S. economy at home and abroad.

6) The president is using the Navy as a besieged superpower should, thereby demonstrating a capacity and a will to defend the neighbors and strategic interests of the U.S. For let there be no illusions: The U.S. is besieged in this hemisphere today to a degree that wouldn't have been credible five years ago.

7) Mr. Reagan has undertaken in his

speeches an ideological counteroffensive against the Soviet Union that has been supported, in an unprecedented move, by daily editorials over the Voice of America.

8) A similar counteroffensive began in the United Nations in 1981 with the appointment of Jeane Kirkpatrick as U.S. ambassador and it hasn't let up.

9) At least 100 KGB agents have been expelled in recent months from France

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and other democracies, openly and with lots of media coverage.

10) The top priority is that the U.S. and its allies are planning to deploy the missiles in December as scheduled.

In the face of such a display of anti-Soviet activity by the West, the likes of which haven't been seen since the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, can one realistically assume that Yuri Andropov assumed his top posts to preside over the liquidation of the Soviet empire?

According to highly informed sources, Moscow has been signaling frantically in public statements and through confidential channels that unless the U.S. forgoes the scheduled missile deployment, it will react. But the Soviet Union hasn't specified what its moves might be. Washington analysts suggest that, despite a Soviet reputation for prudence and caution, Western opinion should be prepared for such moves as (singly, sequentially or collectively):

1) Deployment of SS-20s in Cuba.

2) A crisis over Berlin. The Soviet ambassador to East Germany has said publicly that if the U.S. implants its missiles in Western Europe, the U.S.S.R. will repudiate the 1971 quadripartite accord on Berlin.

3) A move into Iran by Soviet or by surrogate forces.

Whether or not Reagan officials have

told the Kremlin how and where the U.S. would react to further Soviet attempts to alter existing geopolitical lines, there is no doubt that contingency plans to counter Soviet-inspired emergencies exist in the National Security Council.

Everything in Mr. Andropov's history—his support by the Soviet military, which helped bring him to power in November 1982; his actions and speeches since consolidating that power, his refusal to behave according to the scenarios laid out for him by optimistic Western Sovietologists and journalists—indicates that he won't easily yield to an America whose rearmament program in a few years will threaten what is now Soviet military preponderance in Europe.

And there is a last consideration for Mr. Andropov. Successful American resistance could affect the Soviet hold over its satellites. Any perception in those countries of weakness or retreat would, from the Soviet standpoint, have calamitous effects on its control over Eastern Europe. Yuri Andropov was the Soviet ambassador to Hungary in 1956 when Budapest rose up against the Soviet occupation; he remembers.

Can Only Cheer

At his news conference last week, President Reagan said of Soviet-inspired activity south of our border that the American people weren't as aware as they should be "that this does constitute something of a threat in this hemisphere to peace in the entire hemisphere." Why should they? The president has assured them that he isn't planning a war, and by not publicly discussing possible Soviet reactions, his words imply that there can be a "victory" on the cheap.

Anyone who believes in human rights and the need for strengthening the democracies against aggression can only cheer Mr. Reagan for his resistance to the spread of Soviet power. But we must also be prepared for the moment when the cheering will have to stop and hard decisions will have to be made. Has Mr. Reagan prepared the American people for that contingency?

Mr. Beichman, a visiting scholar at the Hoover Institution, is the co-author of a just-published biography of Yuri Andropov.

Watt Never Did Believe in Privatizing U.S. Lands

By STEVE H. HANKE

During a June 29 breakfast meeting with Western governors in Kalispell, Mont., Interior Secretary James G. Watt characterized as "stupid" last year's announcement that public land would be sold to reduce the national debt. Furthermore, Mr. Watt blamed himself for this "stupid" announcement and the land-sales policy.

These remarks were only a prelude to what was to follow. Last week, Mr. Watt announced that he would

even include Secretary Watt as a member.)

What is so remarkable, therefore, is the secretary's turning openly not on himself, but on the president's program. What isn't remarkable is Mr. Watt's opposition to the land-sales idea.

Contrary to press reports and the wailing of critics of the administration's environmental policies, Secretary Watt has been opposed to the president's land sales

tary has even played on the environmentalists' worst fears by characterizing the transfer of public lands into private hands as a policy in which "sheep pasture will become an industrial site, (and) desert lands will be used for hotels and resorts."

For reasons only Mr. Watt knows for sure, the interior secretary doesn't like the idea of privatization as defined in Web-

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